

October 1, 2003

MEMORANDUM FOR: AIS Observers

FROM: David C. Potter  
Branch Chief, FSB

SUBJECT: Pinger Tester

Observers operating inside the pinger areas will be issued a device to test whether pingers are operable, a pinger to test, and new Pinger Tester Sheets. Observers must first be trained on how to use the testers before doing these trips.

At the recommendation of the New England Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Team (TRT) a letter was sent from the National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Regional Administrator to commercial fishing permit holders who may use gillnet gear in areas where pingers are required informing them that observers will be checking the function of pingers in the required areas. It is important to know whether the pingers were transmitting or not to be able to get more information on whether the use of pingers is an effective bycatch reduction method.

To help plan if the trip will be in pinger areas, some background information is provided in the attached press guide and map.

If the gillnet trip within a pinger area is a **Limited** trip, the observer will test every pinger as it is hauled on board. This should not affect the observer's ability to perform the regular required marine mammal haul watch. It will be particularly important to test the pingers near a harbor porpoise take. If the gillnet trip is a **Complete** trip, the observer will perform the fish sampling as required. However, should a harbor porpoise take occur, the remaining pingers on that string should be tested as they are hauled on board. The observer will be issued a separate sheet to record whether the individual pingers were tested and are functioning or were tested and were malfunctioning. Please see the attached draft of the Pinger Tester Sheet. This sheet should be filed at the end of the trip.

If you have any questions please contact Amy Van Atten at [Amy.Van.Atten@noaa.gov](mailto:Amy.Van.Atten@noaa.gov) or (508)495-2266.

Thank you.

NEFOP Memo-03-005

Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Plan  
Gulf of Maine

The Gulf of Maine portion of the plan pertains to all fishing with sink gillnets and other gillnets capable of catching multispecies in New England waters, from Maine through Rhode Island east of 72/30' W. longitude (see map).

The rule includes time and area closures, some of which are complete closures; others are closures to multispecies gillnet fishing unless pingers are used in the prescribed manner. In addition to the closures listed here, other closures are already established under Framework 25 of the Multispecies (groundfish) FMP; these closures are intended both to protect cod and to reduce the take of harbor porpoise.

Gulf of Maine closures

**Northeast Area**

August 15 to September 13 Closed

**Mid-Coast Area**

September 15 to May 31 Gillnets with pingers allowed

**Massachusetts Bay Area**

December 1 to Feb. 28/29 Gillnets with pingers allowed

March 1 - 31 Closed

April 1 to May 31 Gillnets with pingers allowed

**Cape Cod South Area**

December 1 to Feb. 28/29 Gillnets with pingers allowed

March 1-31 Closed

April 1- May 31 Gillnets with pingers allowed

**Offshore Area**

November 1 to May 31 Gillnets with pingers allowed

**Cashes Ledge Area**

February 1 - 28/29 Closed